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1968/01/21

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CITE: MAC 02992

21 JANUARY 1968

DTG : 210945Z

FROM: GEN WESTMORELAND, COMUSMACV, SAIGON

TO : ADM SHARP, CINCPAC, HAWAII

INFO: GEN WHEELER, CJCS, WASHINGTON

REF: A. COMUSMACV MAC 02797 DTG 180009Z JAN

B. CINCPAC DTG 18 2231Z JAN

1. THE ANTICIPATED ENEMY ATTACK ON KHE SANH WAS INITIATED LAST EVENING. KHE SANH MILITARY INSTALLATION HAS BEEN UNDER CONSTANT ROCKET AND MORTAR FIRE SINCE EARLY MORNING, AND HILL 861 HAS BEEN UNDER GROUND ATTACK. AMMUNITION AND POL DUMPS HAVE BEEN HIT, WITH FIRE AND EXPLOSIONS REPORTED BY AIR FORCE FAC. 7AF IS MAINTAINING AN AIRBORNE COMMAND POST AND FAC'S IN THE AREA. THERE IS A BUILD-UP NORTH OF THE DMZ AND IN BASE AREAS 101 WEST OF QUANG TRI AND 114 WEST OF HUE. THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS ARE DESTINED TO BE ACTIVE.

2. THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN:

A. ON 6 JAN A COORDINATED INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION EFFORT WAS INITIATED ON THE KHE SANH AREA (NIAGARA I) USING MAXIMUM AVAILABLE RESOURCES.

B. ON 6 JAN, I DIRECTED GEN MOMYER TO PREPARE A PLAN TO CONCENTRATE ALL AVAILABLE AIR RESOURCES INTO THE KHE SANH AREA (NIAGARA II).

C. ON 17 JAN THE 1ST AIR CAVALRY DIVISION MINUS ONE BRIGADE BEGAN TO DEPLOY TO HUE/PHU BAI, AND WILL CLOSE TOMMORROW.

D. ON 18 JAN TWO ADDITIONAL VIETNAMESE AIRBORNE BATTALIONS

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DEPLOYED TO HUE, MAKING A TOTAL OF FOUR IN THE AREA.

E. ON THE 19TH, I DIVERTED ALL B-52 STRIKES TO THE AREA.

F. BASED ON MY VISIT TO III MAF ON 19 JANUARY, I SENT MY J2 TO KHE SANH ON 20 JANUARY TO INSURE COORDINATION OF RECONNAISSANCE ACTIVITIES IN AND AROUND KHE SANH.

G. ON THE 19TH, I DIRECTED GEN CUSHMAN TO DEPLOY THE 3D BRIGADE OF THE 1ST AIR CAVALRY DIVISION AS SOON AS PRACTICAL FROM THE WHEELER-WALLOWA AREA TO HUE/PHU BAI TO JOIN ITS PARENT DIVISION.

H. ON 20 JANUARY, I INSTRUCTED LTG WEYAND TO DEPLOY THE 2D BRIGADE OF THE 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION TO HUE/PHU BAI FOR ATTACHMENT TO 1ST CAVALRY DIVISION AS SOON AS AIR LIFT BECOMES AVAILABLE, PROBABLY ABOUT 23 JANUARY.

I. BASED ON PLANS INITIATED LAST WEEK, I DIRECTED GEN MOMYER ON 20 JANUARY TO DIVERT ANY USEFUL "DUMP TRUCK" ASSETS FROM THE MUSCLE SHOALS PROJECT TO THE QUANG TRI AREA.

J. ON 20 JANUARY, I INSTRUCTED LTG CUSHMAN TO DEFER ANY FURTHER WORK ON THE TRACE INVOLVED IN THE DYE MARKER PROJECT SO AS TO KEEP MAXIMUM TROOPS AVAILABLE TO REACT TO ENEMY INITIATIVES.

K. TODAY, I AM SENDING GEN ABRAMS TO III MAF TO ASSESS THE SITUATION. ALSO I HAVE DIRECTED GEN MOMYER TO STATION AN LIAISON OFFICER AT KHE SANH.

4. IT HAS NEVER BEEN MY INTENTION TO IN ANY WAY INTERFERE WITH THE CLOSE AIR SUPPORT SO ESSENTIAL TO THE MARINES ON THE GROUND OR TO UPSET THE SYSTEM AT THIS CRITICAL TIME. ON THE OTHER HAND, I INTEND TO DO ALL POSSIBLE TO BRING TO BEAR IN THE MOST EFFICIENT AND COORDINATED WAY ALL WEAPONS THAT CAN SUPPORT OUR FIGHT DURING THE IMPORTANT PERIOD AT HAND. I URGENTLY NEED

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AUTHORITY TO DELEGATE TO MY DEPUTY COMMANDER FOR AIR, THE CONTROL THAT I DEEM APPROPRIATE OVER THE AIR ASSETS IN MY COMMAND. THE FOLLOWING ARE MY INSTRUCTIONS TO HIM AND CG III MAF WHICH I PLAN TO ISSUE AS A MATTER OF OPERATIONAL URGENCY AND WHICH I BELIEVE YOU WILL FIND FULLY SATISFACTORY. QUOTE.

1. I CONSIDER IT IMPERATIVE THAT WE USE THE MAXIMUM AIR FIREPOWER AVAILABLE TO MEET THE ENEMY THREAT IN I CORPS. THIS WAS THE ISSUE WHICH PROMPTED MY MESSAGE (COPY BEING RELAYED TO YOU) MAC 52791 171200Z JAN 68.

2. IN ORDER TO EFFECT DETAILED APPLICATION OF MY AIR RESOURCES IN I CORPS, THE FOLLOWING DIRECTIVE WILL APPLY:

A. 7TH AIR FORCE WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE AIR SUPPORT OF THE 1ST AIR CAVALRY AND AMERICAL DIVISIONS NOW DEPLOYED INTO I CORPS. POLICY OF HAVING 7TH AIR FORCE SUPPORT ARMY AND ARVN UNITS IN I CORPS WILL CONSTITUTE GUIDANCE FOR FUTURE DEPLOYMENTS.

B. TO MEET THE THREAT IN THE QUANG TRI- THUA THIEN AREA, I HAVE DIRECTED MY DEPUTY COMDR MACV AIR, GEN MOMYER, TO DEVELOP A PLAN TO CONCENTRATE ALL AVAILABLE AIR RESOURCES (IN THE BATTLE AREA). THE INITIAL AREA OF CONCENTRATION WILL BE AROUND KHE SANH (NIAGARA II). DEPENDING UPON THE TACTICAL SITUATION THE AREA WILL BE SHIFTED. DEPUTY COMUSMACV FOR AIR OPERATIONS WILL COORDINATE THE DETAILS OF THIS AIR PLAN WITH THE 1ST MARINE AIR WING AND III MAF AS APPROPRIATE. I HAVE CHARGED HIM WITH THE OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR AIR OPERATIONS FOR THE EXECUTION

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OF THIS PLAN. HE WILL COORDINATE AND DIRECT THE EMPLOYMENT OF TAG AIR, MARINE AIR, DIVERTED AIR STRIKES FROM OUT OF COUNTRY AIR OPERATIONS AND SUCH NAVAL AIR THAT MAY BE REQUESTED. B-52 STRIKES WILL BE COORDINATED THROUGH HIM.

C. UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE, IT IS DIRECTED THAT III MAF MAKE AVAILABLE TO THE 7TH AIR FORCE ALL TACTICAL BOMBER SORTIES NOT REQUIRED FOR DIRECT AIR SUPPORT OF MARINE UNITS. THESE SORTIES WILL BE INITIALLY COMMITTED TO THE NIAGARA II OPERATION.

3. (S) I WISH TO STRESS THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR COORDINATION OF ALL ELEMENTS OF THE COMMAND TO BRING OUR FIREPOWER AGAINST THE ENEMY IN THE MOST EFFECTIVE MANNER. THE SERIOUS THREAT WE FACE IN I CORPS AND KHE SANH IN PARTICULAR, DEMANDS THIS. I HAVE DIRECTED MY AIR DEPUTY TO INSURE IN MY NAME THAT THESE AIR RESOURCES ARE APPLIED TO THIS END. UNQUOTE.

5. A SIMILAR DIRECTIVE NOW UNDER STUDY WITH RESPECT TO THE EFFICIENT UTILIZATION OF AIRLIFT MAY BE NECESSARY DUE TO THE CRITICAL NATURE OF THIS RESOURCE.